

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Quarterly



from *Periwinkle*

TO RUTLAND GO' By Thomas Rowley

An invitation to the poor Tenants that live under their pateroons in the Province of New-York, to come and settle on our good Lands under the New-Hampshire Grants. Composed at the time when the Land-jobbers of New-York served their writs of ejectment on a number of our Settlers, the execution of which we opposed by force, until we could have the matter fairly laid before the King, and Board of Trade and Plantations, for their direction.

I.

Come all you labouring hands
That toil below,
Among the rocks and sands;
That plow and sow,
Upon your hired lands
Let out by cruel hands;
'Twill make you large amends,
To Rutland go.

II

Your pateroons forsake,
Whose greatest care,
Is slaves of you to make,
While you live there:
Come, quit their barren lands,
And leave them in their hands,
To Rutland go.

'Only the "s" has been normalized in this text from Thomas Rowley, "To Rutland Go," *The Rural Magazine: or Vermont Repository*, 1:7 (July 1795), 383-385. Original spelling, capitalization and punctuation have been retained.



from *The Fallow Field*

III.

For who would be a slave,
That may be free:
Here you good land may have,
But come and see.
The soil is deep and good,
Here in this pleasant wood;
Where you may raise your food,
And happy be.

IV.

West of the Mountain Green
Lies Rutland fair;
The best that e'er was seen
For soil and air:
Kind zephyr's pleasant breeze,
Whispers among the trees,
Where men may live at ease,
With prudent care.



from *Periwinkle*

V.

Here cows give milk to eat,
 By nature fed:
 Our fields afford good wheat,
 And corn for bread.
 Here sugar trees they stand,
 Which sweetens all our land,
 We have them at our hand,
 Be not afraid.

VI.

Here's roots of every kind,
 To preserve our lives;
 The best of anodoynes,
 And rich costives.
 The balsam of the tree,
 Supplies our chirurgery:
 No safer can you be
 In any land.



from *Fallowfield*

VII.

Here stands the lofty pine,
 And makes a show;
 As straight as gunter's line
 Their bodies grow.
 Their lofty heads they rear,
 Amid the atmosphere,
 Where the wing'd tribes repair,
 And sweetly sing.

VIII.

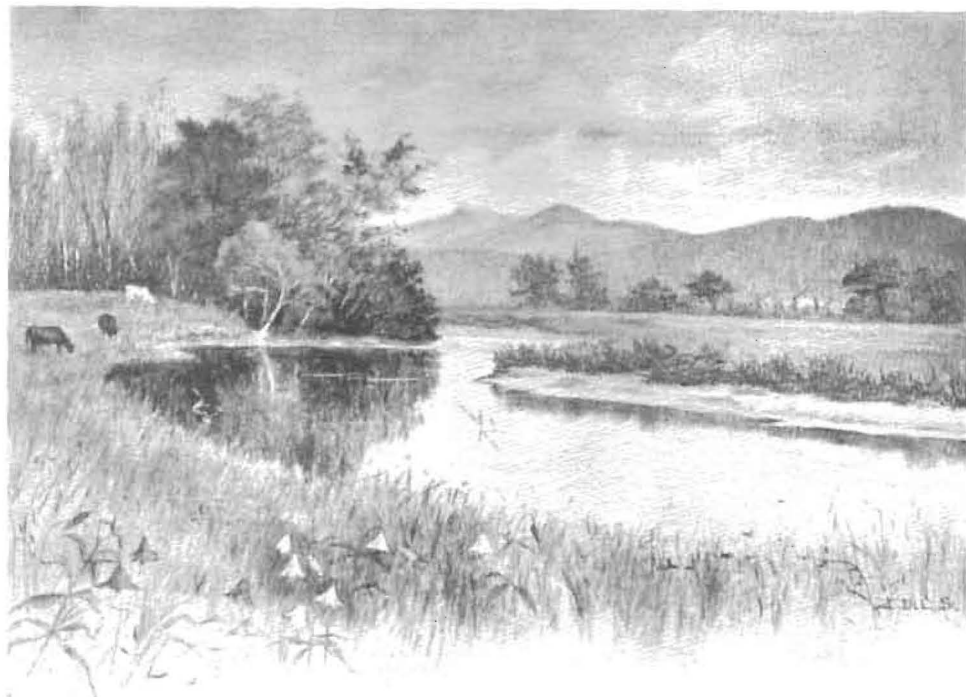
The butternut and beech,
 And the elm tree,
 They strive their heads to reach
 As high as they:
 But falling much below,
 They make an even show:
 The pines more lofty grow,
 And crown the woods.

IX.

Here glides a pleasant stream,
 Which doth not fail,
 To spread the richest cream
 O'er the intervale.
 As rich as Eden's soil,
 Before that sin did spoil,
 Or man was doom'd to toil,
 To get his bread.

X.

Here little salmon glide,
 So neat and fine,
 Where you may be supply'd
 With hook and line:
 They are the finest fish,
 To cook a dainty dish,
 As good as one could wish
 To feed upon.



from *Periwinkle*

XI.

The pigeon, goose, and duck
They fill our beds;
The beaver, coon, and fox,
They crown our heads.
The harmless moose and deer,
Are food and clothes to wear;
Nature could do no more
For any land.

XII.

There's many a pleasant town
Lies in this vale,
Where you may settle down;
You need not fail
To make a fine estate,
If you are not too late,
You need not fear the fate,
But come along.

XIII.

We value not New-York,
With all their powers;
For here we'll stay and work,
The land is ours.
And as for great Duane,
With all his wicked train,
They may eject again.
We'll not resign.

XIV.

This is that noble land,
By conquest won:
Took from a savage band,
With sword and gun.
We drove them to the west,
They could not stand the test
And from the Gallic pest,
This land is free.

XV.

Here churches we'll erect
Both neat and fine;
The gospel we'll protect,
Pure and divine.
The pope's supremacy
We utterly deny,
And Lewis we defy:
We're George's men.

XVI.

In George we will rejoice,
He is our king;
We will obey his voice
In everything.
Here we his servants stand,
Upon his conquer'd land,
Good Lord may he defend
Our property.



from *Periwinkle*

Background of Illustrator

Zulma Delacy Dorr Steele, the only daughter of Seneca M. and Julia C. Ripley Dorr was born at Ghent, Columbia County, New York on Sept. 17, 1851. In 1855 her parents moved to Rutland, Vermont, where she lived until at age 14, she went to Ripley Female College in Poultney, Vermont. There she spent most of the next three years. In the fall of 1869 she went to New York City and took drawing lessons at the Art School of the Cooper Institute, which was headed by Dr. Rimmer. In 1871 she married William Henry Steele. During the following years Zulma lived in Wisconsin except for numerous extended visits at "The Maples," the family home in Rutland. Zulma felt her heart was continually divided between her two homes. Throughout her life Zulma drew or painted. "Fallow Field" and "Periwinkle" are two of her published works. Although these charcoal drawings were done about a century after Rowley's work, they still picture the same pastoral beauty that Rowley tried to capture in verse. But even this similarity bears a strange twist. The Steele family were descendants of the Livingston family, prominent New York landlords to whom Rowley was so opposed.

Historical Setting of Poem

Between 1749 and 1764 Benning Wentworth, the provincial Governor of New Hampshire granted 131 townships in the territory west of the Connecticut River. Each of these townships was about six miles square and collectively became known as the New Hampshire grants. During the American Revolution they became the Republic of Vermont and in 1791 the State of Vermont.

Although most of these grants were made to New Englanders, in 1764 the British government established the Connecticut River as the boundary between New Hampshire and New York. This placed the land within the jurisdiction of New York and made the New Hampshire titles of dubious value. After the promulgation of this decision in America in 1765, the provincial government of New York began making grants of land in Vermont that conflicted with New Hampshire grants even though the government in England had cautioned against disturbing any actual settlers.

The settlers from New England states who were accustomed to the New England way of life with its 18th century democracy had no desire to live under the New York aristocracy. In addition most of Vermont's early settlers held New Hampshire titles simply because they were cheaper and their provisions were loosely enforced, if at all.

During this period James Duane, a New York City lawyer, became the leader of a New York coterie attempting to establish claims in what was to be later known as Vermont. Duane had married the eldest daughter of Colonel Robert Livingston, the proprietor of Livingston Manor in eastern New York. Duane became the principal representative of the Livingston and other New York land interests. This included some 64,000 acres he personally acquired between 1765 and 1767. In 1771 he acquired a 1,000 acre share in the New York grant of Socialborough which included the New Hampshire grant of Rutland.

Duane became the symbolic recipient of most of the resisting rhetoric and abuse which Vermonsters showered so bountifully upon their opponents. In 1770 the conflicts came to a head as Duane obtained court-ordered ejectments of settlers holding New Hampshire titles. The court judge was Robert Livingston, Duane's father-in-law and a partisan investor. But legal success was not followed by successful possession. The Green Mountain Boys, a military organization for the protection of the settlers' interest successfully turned back time and again attempts by the New York government to carry out the ejectment decisions and generally extend New York law and authority in Vermont.

In this context Thomas Rowley wrote "To Rutland Go" which promoted the township of Rutland under its New Hampshire grant. It is particularly addressed to New York farmers who might wish to escape their unhappy lot as tenants under the aristocratic New York land owners. Its revolutionary statement that the New York aristocracy could be successfully opposed is carefully joined to a statement of loyalty to King George III.

Literary Tradition of Poem

Oftentimes public poetry in early America served very practical considerations. Michael Wigglesworth's famous poem, "Day of Doom," by its very popularity and theme indicated the temper of seventeenth century New England. In the eighteenth century, though religion was certainly very dominant, more secular issues emerged, particularly in political commentary.

Verse was important as a political weapon which could be used very effectively. Philip Freneau (1752-1832) in his poem "The Battle of the Kegs" made the British the butt of his popular satire. Thomas Rowley's poem, sometimes referred to as "To Rutland Go" or "an Invitation to the poor tenants that live under their

patroons in the Province of New York," is probably an earlier example in the same tradition. Although not as satirical, it is a poem of the public forum which is easily remembered verse which sought to put down the Yorkers and to advance the New Hampshire cause. It may have been written as early as 1770 but probably no later than 1774.

The first three stanzas attack the patroon system of New York in which a settler became a tenant of the land. Stanzas IV to XI indicate the ideal pastoral tradition in which a person may live at ease with prudent care. Nature supports man in this environment by the best of foods. Stanza VI in particular shows the medicines available in the area. This allusion was frequently used. It is the "El Dorado" or "Promised Land" tradition.

Stanza XIII reaffirms the resolve to oppose the New York attempts at ejection. Stanza XIV supports this resolve by reference to the efforts that wrested control of this land from the French and the Indians. The last two stanzas affirm the established Protestant religious and English political traditions. The last stanza is particularly ironic in view of the American Revolution that was to follow shortly. However, it must be remembered that very few even of the founding fathers at the beginning of the war favored open secession from England.

This poem offers a good insight into the political controversy of the day, the distrust of the New Yorkers, the theme of independent Vermonters, the Edenic land theme, and the use of political rhetoric.

Thomas Rowley

The following is an excerpt from Walter J. Coates' November 1929 article "The Pioneer Minstrel of Vermont: Thomas Rowley" from *The Vermonter*.

But Rowley was first and foremost a poet and wit. If Ethan Allen was the Simon de Montfort of Vermont, Thomas Rowley was its Wyclif and its Chaucer rolled into one. He roused its spirit, hurled its denunciations; yet he also warbled its lyric and improvised its after dinner puns. When Allen and other popular leaders were adjudged guilty of felony by New York courts and condemned to death without benefit of clergy (a deprivation which must have been highly amusing to Ethan), Rowley aided them in drawing up their protest thereto, appending to their prose document his memorable lines:

"When Caesar reigned king at Rome,
St. Paul was sent to hear his doom
For Roman law in a criminal case
Must have the parties face to face,
Or Caesar gives a flat denial.
But here's a law now made of late
Which destines men to awful fate
And hangs and damns without a trial."

Rowley was an improvisator of verse, being able and ready at a moment's warning to compose and recite appropriate words on any subject. Wearing a shabby old hat, Rowley once went up to Appollos Austin's store in Orwell; and after some joking, Austin offered, if Rowley would make an impromptu verse, to give him a new hat. Taking off his old cover, Rowley looked earnestly at it a moment, and said:

"Here's my old hat,
No matter for that,
It's as good as the rest of my raiment;
If I buy me a better
You'll set me down debtor,
And send me to jail for the payment."

Rowley's wit was pungent and epigrammatic and though his verse was lacking in finish, his rhymes being often lame and imperfect, yet they were, for that very reason, as Pliny White says, "all the more acceptable among a people who were themselves rough in all their ways, and with whom strength, whether of muscle or of mind, was one of the cardinal virtues." (cf. "Early Poets of Vermont," 1860 8vo., 33pp.) Certainly this pioneer singer, who is said to have "set the mountains on fire by the inspiration of his muse," which our modern regimented civilization could not produce.

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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The Society publishes the *Quarterly* for its members with the aim of preserving and studying the history of the Rutland community, which is comprised of the Towns of Rutland, Proctor and West Rutland and the City of Rutland. The Society maintains and operates a museum at 101 Center Street, Rutland, in the former Bank of Rutland building (built in 1825), now owned by the City of Rutland and leased to the Society at no charge.

Membership

Membership in the Society is open to all upon payment of dues to the Treasurer—
John Diodati, 16 Cottage Street, Rutland, Vermont 05701

Dues are \$3.00 per year for regular members; for those wishing to give the Society further support, a contributing membership is \$10.00; a business membership is \$25.00; a sustaining membership is \$100.00; and a life membership (one payment only) is \$75.00.

All members receive as part of their membership four issues of the *Quarterly*. The expiration date of each membership is listed on the mailing label of the publication. Members wishing to pay two or more years dues in advance are encouraged to do so to reduce costs.

Manuscripts are invited; address correspondence to the Editor.

Gifts or bequests of money or articles of local historical interest are welcome at all times and are deductible for income tax purposes.

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